

**Name of Library:** Vancouver Public Library

**Address of Library:** 350 West Georgia Street  
Vancouver, British Columbia

**Number of Branch Libraries:** Central Library  
20 branch libraries

**Management:** Paul Whitney  
City Librarian

Paul Whitney is the City Librarian at Vancouver Public Library. He has been involved in various professional activities throughout his career, including serving as President of the Canadian Library Association and the British Columbia Library Association. Presently, he is Chair of the National Library of Canada Council on Access to Information for Print-Disabled Canadians.

In 2002, Paul Whitney received the Canadian Library Association's Outstanding Service to Librarianship Award, and the British Columbia Library Association President's Award for contributions to the Association.

**Volumes in collection:** 2.4 million items  
**Registered Borrowers:** 395,000 cardholders  
**Items Borrowed:** 9.2 million items borrowed annually  
**Library Visitors:** 7,500 visitors to the Central Library/day

**Governance:** Vancouver Public Library operates under the terms of the British Columbia Library Act. It is governed by a Board of Trustees appointed by the Vancouver Mayor and Council of the City of Vancouver. The Library is responsible for expenditure of funds granted to it by the City Council, and the Board of Trustees presents the Library's budget to City Council on an annual basis.



**Architecture:** In November, 1990 a referendum ballot addressed two questions to Vancouverites: was there a need for a new Central Library and a new branch in the Renfrew/Collingwood community. Sixty-nine percent of the population supported the building program.

- **The cost of the library, retail, daycare, and parkade:** \$ 106.8 million.
- **The cost of the Federal Tower:** \$ 50 million.
- **The cost of the move from 750 Burrard to Library Square:** \$ 300,000.

The architects for Library Square were selected on the basis of a two-stage open competition. From 28 expressions of interest submissions comprising 50 local, national, and international architects, 10 consortia were placed on a short list to be interviewed. From this list, the following three teams were selected in December 1991 to participate in an anonymous competition:

- Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Architects with James K.M. Cheng Architects and Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership.
- Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates with Waisman Dewar Grout Carter Inc.
- Moshe Safdie & Associates with Downs/Archambault and Partners.

Each team received \$100,000 to produce an "Expression of Vision" of Library Square.

On August 14th, 1992, the winning submission of Moshe Safdie & Associates' Downs/Archambault Partners was announced by Vancouver City Council. Safdie designed Habitat in Montreal, the National Gallery of Canada, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts addition, Quebec City's Museum of Civilization, the Ottawa City Hall and most recently the Ford Centre for the Performing Arts.

Downs/Archambault designed Canada Place, Kwantlen College in Langley, International Village in Vancouver, the YWCA Hotel in Vancouver, additions to Langara College and the Britannia Community Services Centre among other projects.

Just outside the Preschoolers' Lounge is a fountain which is a part of the Public Art Project. The installation of the fountain is the first phase of Vancouver's Public Art for Library Square. A Public Art Endowment constitutes the second phase of the Library's Public Art Plan. Approximately \$475,000 in funds designed for public art at Library Square will be placed in an endowment created to fund a bi-annual public art competition.

#### **10 Facts about the Vancouver Public Central Library:**

1. In 1991, Library Square was selected as the site for the new Central Library.
2. Excavation began at the Library Square site in January, 1993.
3. It took 26 months to complete the project.
4. The structure is a rectangle within an ellipse.
5. The library building has 9 floors, 7 of which are occupied by the library. Levels 8 and 9 will be leased by the Provincial Government for 20 years. This allows for further expansion of the library.
6. The library building is 37,000 square meters (398,000 square feet) of which 32,500 square meters (349,100 square feet) are occupied by the library.
7. Books and materials are moved through the building by vertical and horizontal conveyors provided by Translogic.
8. 51 kilometers of cable were laid in the library, including a vertical fibre-optic backbone.
9. The seating capacity of the new library is 1,200.
10. There are 700+ parking stalls; bicycle racks are available around Library Square.

**Operating Hours:** As of January, 2005, the Central Library's hours are 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday to Thursday, and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Sunday 1 to 5 p.m.

For three of the past five years, the city's entire library system has closed for a week in August to save \$150,000, or about three per cent of its annual operating budget. But in 2004 the Board of the Vancouver Public Library voted to extend the hours after the City Council agreed to add that amount to the library's current budget of \$34 million. Paul Whitney stated that because summer is one of the busiest seasons for the library, it was frustrating to close branches for a week-especially since the Central Library is a tourist attraction.

**Programming:** The Vancouver Public Library believes that library programs should:

- Promote the communication of ideas and information and extend Readers Advisory and reference service to both children and adults. Library programs are often a first contact with books and reading.
- Stimulate interest in and use of the Library.
- Promote interest in reading. Children's programs should emphasize the role of the Children's librarian as educator.
- Promote an awareness of contemporary issues while continuing to maintain impartiality and sensitivity.
- Attract non-users and reflect the need to connect programs with library resources as part of the process of creating lifetime library users.
- Provide an entertaining, enjoyable and educational experience.
- Be freely available to the public.

The following are Vancouver Public Library Programs:

- Patrons can make get free, one-on-one advice from a Business Librarian by appointment to help with starting a business; identifying prospective clients and competitors; locating financing sources; tracking industry trends; and researching domestic and foreign markets
- For Children, Teens & Families there are Babytime, Toddler, Preschool and Family Storytimes. There is also a Summer Reading Club, which encourages summer reading and public library use by school-age children and families encouraging them to set and meet their own reading goals; Summer Bookcamps for kids 9-12 and 13-15 including workshops like writing for television and film; a competitive "Open Mic Night" for adults "tired of singing in the shower or reading poetry to your cat" with a special portion for teens; a "Read-along Program" where kids with reading problems can visit the library twice a week and spend time reading with a tutor and listening to stories.
- Recent examples of special programs include origami workshops, Lego workshops, kids events for Easter and Chinese New Year and an Easter event where the library's

Multilingual Division's Chinese Outreach librarians prepared stories, songs, crafts and games for children to be offered in Cantonese and Mandarin simultaneously.

- “Techno Tuesdays” are a series of hands-on programs exploring electronic research tools. There are also courses in using the library, using the card catalogue, researching and evaluating health information and legal information online. The library offers free classes in Computer Basics, Internet Basics and E-mail Basics. The basics courses are offered in English, Chinese and Spanish.
- The library’s website offers links and contact information to a number of other adult education centers.

**Collection:** The Central Library maintains a collection of 1.4 million items and acts as a system wide resource. The collections are subject divided into 11 public service units, either by broad subject or by user base or format. A substantial amount of material is retained for reference only use in the Central library; this includes periodicals, newspapers and government documents. The Central Library maintains specialized indexes, databases, and an extensive website, as well as subscribing to a growing number of electronic resources, some of which are distributed to branches and to library card holders for offsite use. A key mandate of the Central Library is to provide improved interfaces between print and electronic collections.

The Special Collections department (reference only materials) maintains a very strong local history collection, in print and photos, as well as children's materials and rare books.

**Fundraising:** The Vancouver Public Library Foundation is an autonomous organization directed by a volunteer board. Friends of the Vancouver Public Library is a non-profit, volunteer organization founded in 1995 to support Vancouver Public Library.